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BROWNBACK, WTO CAUCUS MEET WITH SECRETARY GLICKMAN; PUSH FOR STRONG AG TRADE AGENDA

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Congressional Caucus for Farmers and Ranchers, met today with Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, where the caucus members outlined agriculture trade goals for U.S. negotiators at the upcoming WTO talks. The WTO negotiations begin in Seattle on November 30.

“As Congress looks at ways to improve the current ag economy – it is vital that government fight for free trade and to open markets so that American producers have a fair playing field,” Brownback said. “The upcoming round of WTO negotiations in Seattle is a vital opportunity to move this important issue forward.

“It is vital that USDA play a strong role in the upcoming trade negotiations. If this WTO round is truly to focus on free and fair trade for agriculture, we need a strong commitment from this agency to push our ag trade agenda forward.

“Today’s meeting with Secretary Glickman is the latest effort of our farmers and ranchers caucus to keep the important goals of free and fair trade utmost on the Administration’s agenda.

“This bi-partisan caucus has been working hard to provide a strong and bright focus to our trade agenda. It is heartening that so many of us from such differing political perspectives have agreed on these ag trade priorities. I think this sends a strong message to our foreign trading partners,” Brownback said.

PRIORITIES: Areas of strong focus in the next trade round are:

- Eliminating illegal sanitary/phytosanitary regulations that block U.S. exports (hormone beef ban for example). The WTO must focus on the issue of genetically-modified crops. It is vital to promote science-based decision-making and enforcement measures on trade issues.

- Eliminating the unfair subsidization of foreign crops, especially European subsidies. The focus here should be to make government support more equal across the board as opposed to an agreement on overall reduction. This means tearing down EU subsidies which far outpace the U.S.

- Reforming state trading enterprises (STEs) to remove the ability of such enterprises to make political rather than economic decisions on imports. This is an issue in which I have been active on in the past, and which will be a major issue in Seattle.